

# Patient partners and Swiss university hospitals join forces to develop a position on patient and public involvement

Chantal Britt, [chantal.britt@bfh.ch](mailto:chantal.britt@bfh.ch)<sup>1</sup>; Sandrine Jonniaux, [sandrine.jonniaux@hug.ch](mailto:sandrine.jonniaux@hug.ch)<sup>3</sup>; Joachim Rapin, [joachim.rapin@chuv.ch](mailto:joachim.rapin@chuv.ch)<sup>2</sup>; Stéphane Coendoz, [stephane@coendoz.ch](mailto:stephane@coendoz.ch)<sup>2</sup>; Anne Pouly, [anne.pouly@chuv.ch](mailto:anne.pouly@chuv.ch)<sup>2</sup>; Yolanda Hofer, [yolanda.hofer@hotmail.com](mailto:yolanda.hofer@hotmail.com)<sup>4</sup>; Anja Hermann, [anja.hermann@usb.ch](mailto:anja.hermann@usb.ch)<sup>4</sup>; Anne Leuppi-Taegtmeyer, [anne.leuppi-taegtmeyer@usb.ch](mailto:anne.leuppi-taegtmeyer@usb.ch)<sup>4</sup>; Miriam Wettstein, [miriam.wettstein@insel.ch](mailto:miriam.wettstein@insel.ch)<sup>1</sup>; Mathilde Mangin, [mangin.mathilde@gmail.com](mailto:mangin.mathilde@gmail.com)<sup>3</sup>; Miguel Ferreira, [miguel.ferreira@hug.ch](mailto:miguel.ferreira@hug.ch)<sup>3</sup>; Sonja Beckmann, [sonja.beckmann@usz.ch](mailto:sonja.beckmann@usz.ch)<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Bern University Hospital; <sup>2</sup> Centre Hospitalier Universitaire Vaudois; <sup>3</sup> Hôpitaux Universitaires de Genève; <sup>4</sup> University Hospital Basel; <sup>5</sup> Zurich University Hospital

## Background



Healthcare services are facing different challenges, including demand for more active involvement of patients and their relatives (patient public involvement - PPI). These developments have prompted unimedsuisse, the association of the five Swiss university hospitals and medical faculties in Basel, Bern, Geneva, Lausanne and Zurich, to reflect on these changes and develop a joint position and recommendations on PPI, and its implementation at their hospitals.

In October 2022, healthcare professionals including medical directors, nurses, quality and safety managers, and patient partners initiated a participatory co-creative process to develop a shared vision, key recommendations and practical measures to facilitate the implementation of PPI. A team was set up, consisting of at least one patient partner and one healthcare professional per hospital. The final version of the Positionpaper was approved by all Directorates and published in French and German in June 2025.

## Results

### Main Recommendations

unimedsuisse published 12 general recommendations and seven more specific recommendations to implement PPI within university hospitals. The most important points are listed below:

- **Adopt a holistic transformation:** Implement organisation-wide change by aligning structures, processes, and strategies to embed PPI as a continuous improvement approach.
- **Support professionals:** Provide training, resources, and follow-up to help healthcare professionals integrate partnership practices into daily work.
- **Foster a partnership culture:** Encourage patients, relatives, and professionals to engage openly in collaboration, trust, and shared decision-making.
- **Reflect and adapt practices:** Promote self-evaluation and regular feedback to strengthen partnership as a natural component of care.
- **Value contributions:** Recognise and financially compensate the formal involvement of patients and relatives.
- **Enable constructive dialogue:** Create space for diverse perspectives and respectful disagreement as drivers of innovation and relevance.
- **Co-lead projects:** Engage patients and relatives at all levels of involvement, from consultation to co-construction, following the Montreal Model.
- **Diversify opportunities:** Multiply forms and places of participation across different organisational levels.
- **Integrate PPI in digital health:** Ensure e-health tools are designed and implemented with partnership principles to enhance transparency, autonomy, and accessibility.

### Requirements for PPI within hospitals

From hospitals the implementation of PPI requires the following commitments:

- **Leadership commitment:** Clear engagement of hospital boards and executive directors to embed PPI in institutional priorities.
- **Strategic alignment:** Integration of PPI into organisational strategies, policies, and quality & safety frameworks.
- **Operational support:** Dedicated resources, structures, and processes enabling effective patient partnerships.
- **Capacity building:** Continuous training, coaching, and mentoring of staff and patient partners to strengthen a culture of partnership.
- **Cultural transformation:** Long-term shift towards shared decision-making, inclusiveness, and recognition of patients and relatives as equal partners.
- **Sustainability:** Institutionalisation of PPI practices to ensure continuity beyond individual projects or mandates.

## Conclusion

The implementation of PPI requires a profound cultural and organisational transformation, supported by clear leadership, aligned strategies, and sustained operational resources. Building a partnership culture between professionals, patients, and relatives strengthens trust, improves care, and ensures that what matters most to patients becomes central to health services. Next steps include annual reporting on initiatives and development objectives to track progress and maintain institutional accountability as well as the development of shared indicators on patient and family partnership to measure impact consistently across institutions.

